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ABSTRACT

This document describes four states' approaches to increasing the involvement of families in schools. It discusses the strategies used by the states to: (1) enhance teachers' capacity to work with families; (2) encourage local school districts to develop family involvement programs; (3) encourage efforts that use family involvement as a component of school improvement; (4) make family involvement a component of high quality education; and (5) encourage families to make decisions that affect the quality of education programs. For the state of Alabama, a state parent involvement plan, a performance-based school accreditation system, community education programs, and local parent involvement initiatives are discussed. California's state policy which endorses six different types of parent involvement is described, and the activities undertaken to implement the policy are explained. Local parent involvement programs are also considered. Florida's legal framework for ensuring family participation in schools, and several state strategies and initiatives to promote family involvement, are examined. Minnesota's attempts at school reform, educational options, community education programs, parent involvement legislation, and local parent advocacy efforts are described. A 13-item reference list is included. A state contact is provided for each state. (BC)

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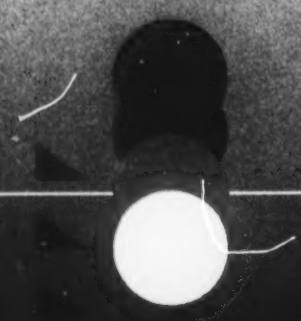
State Strategies and Policies to Improve Family Involvement in Education



A Four-State Case Study
October 1991

PS 020289

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Because the Council represents each state's chief education administrator, it has access to the educational and governmental establishment in each state and to the national influence that accompanies this unique position. CCSSO forms coalitions with many other education organizations and is able to provide leadership for a variety of policy concerns that affect elementary and secondary education. Thus, CCSSO members are able to act cooperatively on matters vital to the education of America's young people.

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Acknowledgements

Families in School was developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) during 1990-91. The publication describes mechanisms (legislation, policies, guidelines and programs) used in four states (Alabama, California, Florida, and Minnesota) to increase family involvement in schools. Through exploration of these mechanisms, the goal was to identify and understand what family involvement represents in the states and its uses as a means of achieving school, student, and family well-being.

During the course of the study, many experts in parent involvement were contacted and site visits made to state education agencies and local school districts. The principal researcher of this report wishes to thank the members of the National Coalition of Parent Involvement in Education for their help in identifying activities in many states. Of special help were Oliver Moles, Linda Moore, and Joyce Epstein. Collection activities would not have been possible without the help of contact persons within the state education agencies: Bobbie Walden and Bob Richey in Alabama, Vivian C. Burton in California, Nancy Livesay in Florida, and Karolyn Kingsbury in Minnesota. Gratitude is also owed to staff at each site who organized visits and participated in interviews. Special thanks go to Judy Manning, Joy Lambert, Elaine Freedman, Linda Cantrell, Joanne Clark, Susan Arkin, Fran Kocha, Judy Bishop, Virginia Bert, Liz Morque and Annis Clark.

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INTRODUCTION

Because schools function better when there is agreement between the school and the family regarding goals for the child and the mechanisms for reaching those goals, the Council of Chief State School Officers has endorsed the need for comprehensive family support, education and involvement efforts in our schools (CCSSO, 1989). Comprehensive efforts that are long-term, suitable to the needs of different families with different needs, and developed in coordination with other community agencies are required if schools are to realize their full potential as community members—members with the resources to support the development of children and families.

According to the Council, "If our goal is to progress toward a 100 percent graduation rate by the year 2000, we must take every possible step to strengthen the resources of the family and connect them to the schools." (CCSSO, 1989, p. iii) Since families are the first and most important teachers of children and prepare and sustain them throughout their tenure with schools, the bond between the home and the school must be continuous. This bond must be nurtured and supported in ways that guarantee the high achievement and success that we seek for all.

Across the nation, schools are discovering new and active roles in the development and support of both the family and the child. This stems from the acknowledgement that schools alone cannot ensure that all students are successful and the additional resources of home and the community must also be brought to bear on the task at hand. Families are also discovering new and active roles to support schools and the achievement of their children. This is particularly evident as school reforms are implemented and greater accountability and higher expectations for performance are demanded by citizens and communities.

Although a growing body of literature exists on the need for expanded family involvement in education, there is limited information on how selected states and state education agencies have encouraged family involvement in schools, which policies or strategies have been used, or the goals and effects of these policies and strategies. If the potential resources available to the school and the family resulting from the synergy of their partnership is realized, schools and families will have powerful new tools for ensuring education success for children.

> The existence of state-level policies, programs, and staff allocation concerning parent involvement is essential because without them the vital connections between the family and the school are obscured or ignored. State superintendents of education . . . exercise perhaps the most influence on school district and school-level activity in this regard. Through legislation, policies, guidelines, staffing and state and federal funding, high level state administrators can, in large measure, determine the success of an educational practice. (Nardine, Chapman and Moles, 1989, p. 1)

State education agencies can provide leadership and the catalyst needed to make successful family involvement, in all its complexity, an integral component of school and school district functions. Because state education agencies implement education policy and administer many federal programs affecting public education, their vision of the role of families in education can impact both the immediate relationship between the teacher and family sparked around their common interest in the child/student, and the state responsibility for providing quality public education and producing high performing students.

Families in School describes four states' approaches for increasing the involvement of families in schools. It discusses in detail particular strategies used by the state education agencies and other state agencies. Of particular interest are strategies used by states to:

1. enhance teacher capacity to work with families as partners in the improvement of their children's education;

2. encourage and assist local districts in developing and implementing family involvement in education programs and initiatives;

3. encourage efforts that use family involvement as a key component of school improvement;

4. make family involvement an integral component of standards for good schools and quality education; and

5. encourage families in making decisions that affect the quality and content of education programs and schools for their children.

This document combines perspectives from the literature on research and practice with the experiences of individual states. Promising practices, key components, costs, pitfalls, barriers to overcome, and successes and failures are presented, identified and analyzed. The publication does not speak directly to the value of one policy over another, but rather uses what we know from the literature and experts about what works, tempered by the experiences of the states in the case studies, to present a variety of approaches with varying results.

States selected for study are Alabama, California, Florida and Minnesota. They were selected following a series of conversations with experts in the field about state activities in the areas of interest described above and conversations with state education agency staff about specific activities in their states. The goal was to find states that were using various strategies and approaches to bring about meaningful family involvement in schools, states that were interested in participating in the case study, and states that were geographically and demographically diverse.

Once selected, site visits were made to each of the state education agencies and a number of interviews conducted with policy makers and program staff. In each state visits were also made to local schools and school districts to view first hand the programs and impact of state policy at that level.

These four states illustrate a variety of approaches and strategies for implementing family involvement policies and practices. These policies and practices reflect a range of ways in which family involvement is viewed in the states and how it is tailored to address the particular concerns and priorities within different states. Taken together, these case studies represent a composite of lessons concerning what is possible given few if any funds, strong leadership, and well-constructed networks.

STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Experts in family involvement practices have been especially critical of the leadership provided by state education agencies particularly in areas of financial and technical support of family involvement activities (Epstein, 1987). Nardine, Chapman and Models (1989) describe a limited picture at best of how family involvement is supported at the state level. Their 1989 survey of state education agency investment in family involvement concluded that the level of staffing in all states is inadequate in proportion to the need and is mostly concentrated within the federal and state compensatory programs that mandate family involvement. Where guidance and assistance have been provided to schools and school districts, it has tended to focus on informational and clearinghouse activities, not on comprehensive and sustaining activities that empower families to support student achievement and school success (e.g., involving families in school-based management, school program evaluation, or in training to strengthen home learning activities).

In the few states that have explicit statutory mandates to ensure statewide family involvement programs and activities, the focus and goals vary greatly. For example, some states such as Missouri, have focused efforts on improving parenting education and family support within the context of early childhood development programs. Other states, such as South Carolina, have focused on family involvement in governance and program areas and mandated family representation on school improvement councils.

The problem in accurately characterizing parent, family or community (states differ in the use of the terms) involvement begins with a lack of coordinated vision among many stakeholders—policy makers, program practitioners, educators, administrators, advocates and families—about the role of families in school and what states and state education agencies can do to achieve improvements in this relationship. This confusion accounts for part of the criticism leveled against state education agencies and the inability to correctly characterize state actions and resources devoted to improving home and school relationships.

Because responsibility for family involvement may fall within several offices of the state education agency, it is difficult to assess the full extent of state education agency efforts or the objectives of those efforts, which may differ from office to office. It is not surprising then that Nardine *et al* found little comparability across the states in offices and programs responsible for family involvement activities. For example, responsibility for family involvement could be found in any or all of the following units of the state education agency: Chapter 1 and other compensatory programs; migrant education; bilingual and community education; federal and state services; adult/early childhood programs; office of the superintendent; and others.

Finally, a definitional problem exists which further confounds the characterization of family involvement across the states.

Researchers and practitioners have developed a frame of reference for family involvement which spans a continuum of types of involvement. They generally agree on the following five types of family involvement described by Epstein (1988):

1. basic obligations of families to support the health, safety and development of the life skills of their children;

2. basic obligations of schools to communicate with families about school policies and programs, and student programs;

3. family involvement in the school in a variety of roles as volunteers and aides, audiences, and attendees at workshops and training sessions;

4. family involvement in the child's learning activities at home; and

5. family involvement in school and program governance and advocacy.

The Council of Chief State School Officers adds to this list a sixth type of involvement:

6. family participation in programs that foster

their own development (e.g., GED preparation, literacy instruction, basic adult education, and job training, etc.).

These distinctions are helpful in describing state-level activities and the focus of state policy in family involvement. In reality, however, these categories are not mutually exclusive; they easily blend and are often co-dependent. For example, meaningful family involvement in home learning activities may require the provision of services to improve the level of literacy in the home. Likewise, goals of improving family involvement in program design or school improvement may require educating families in certain content areas and processes. Although state policy may focus on a particular form of family involvement, activities in support of one focus may require a range of other strategies and resources involving other offices within the state education agency. Unless clearly articulated, the extended supports provided by other areas within the state education agency to a particular policy or activity may not be apparent as a resource.

It also follows that the kind of policies issued at the state level and the kinds of support and guidance provided to districts and schools will be linked to the vision state education agencies (and programs within agencies) have for families in the work of the schools. This vision may embrace one, all types, or some variation of family involvement, and may also include other segments of the community including businesses. In the absence of a consensus across the states that supports the development of comprehensive programs of family involvement in schools and districts, accurate characterizations about the level of state education agency commitment to family involvement will continue to be difficult to assess.

The new federally funded Center on Families, Schools, Communities and Children's Learning is endeavoring to make some sense out of what they call a "thicket" of existing policies at the federal, state and local levels and the effects of those policies on families, schools and communities. Their concern has been that policies and activities to improve family involvement have not been well focused nor have they benefitted the families and students who stand to gain the most from educational improvements resulting from heightened family involvement in education.

These concerns are reflected in a summary of lessons learned from state efforts to promote family involvement compiled by the National Governors' Association (1990). The list provides guidance on what works and where emphases have yet to be placed to create programs and policies that result in meaningful partnerships between schools and families.

- The relationship between parents and schools is ofter still distant, particularly with low-income parents, and many parent involvement activities fail to address issues that concern the disadvantaged.

- Effective programs, both at the state and local levels, do not adhere to any one design—the best ones are comprehensive and use a combination of approaches in attempting to meet the needs of a wide range of parents.

- Policy makers and educators must adjust parent involvement efforts to new family structures and styles and recognize that many of those hardest to reach are not white, middle class, or American-born.

- A relatively small percentage of parents have personal problems so severe that without proper assistance they cannot work cooperatively with educators.

- Many families lack the time or motivation to participate in educational activities within schools. Therefore educators must find more ways to provide activities for parents and children to engage in at home.

- Efforts to involve parents must continue throughout students' years in schools.

- More and better ways must also be found for parents to help set school policies and decisions.

- Whatever form parent involvement takes, it

must mesh with broader academic goals of the schools.

Specific program level guidance is found in a recent report by Goodson, Swartz and Millsap (February 1991) entitled **Working with Families.** Although the focus of the report is on promising programs designed to help parents support young children's learning, findings indicate how program policies and goals result in a wide spectrum of participation strategies and resulting benefits to families.

- Each family education program highlighted in the document has empowering parents to become successful teachers of their children as its primary emphasis. "Empowerment" strategies often address those problems parents face that interfere with their participation in the school's program, such as low literacy, isolation and powerlessness. Practical concerns such as nutrition, child development, discipline, child and spouse abuse, and chemical addictions are also addressed.

- All programs provide multiple levels of parent participation, viewing any contact with parents as positive.

- Programs recognize that different ways of participating require different skills of parents and offer differing opportunities. For example, home visits are effective for working with parents who have few group process skills and low self-esteem. However, unlike group meetings, home visits do not require parents to interact with the school or provide them with opportunities to connect with other parents and to develop self-confidence.

- Programs provide services that ease families' transitions across types of participation—from individual to small group services, from home to school settings.

- Programs adapt to the varied literacy levels of families.

- Programs are flexible (e.g., in scheduling, attendance requirements, location) in order to include the most disadvantaged and disorganized families.

- Programs use numerous techniques to create bonds between parents and the program (e.g., formalized commitment represented by a contract or certificate, support groups, etc.).

Against this backdrop of activity and a growing body of information that defines good practice in family programs, the current study was undertaken. Its purpose was to determine the policy goals of family involvement in selected states; the strategies and mechanisms for achieving changes in the ways families interact with schools and their children; and whether policies and programs are evolving in the states that create a coordinated state vision of family involvement. It is one among other current attempts to present a clearer picture of policies and strategies that ultimately impact on schools and families.

GENERAL FINDINGS

The four state case studies as well as conversations with state education agency staff in other states indicate that there is much activity in the name of family and parent involvement. Many states are employing a number of strategies to make family involvement systemic to public education. These efforts are taking place in several units within state education agencies and are critical to the success of many state strategies for reforming education.

Increasingly, state policies have advanced family support and services to families with young children as a mechanism for preventing a variety of social problems such as child abuse and neglect and school failure. Over 30 states have adopted the Missouri Parents as Teachers (PAT) model and numerous parenting education initiatives exist for families of young children.

In the four case study states, family support, services and education are becoming increasingly important activities of the state education agency. Alabama uses community education as a mechanism for delivering family education and linking families with services. Minnesota has its long standing Early Childhood and Family Education (ECFE) program which is implemented in over 300 sites statewide. The Florida First Start Program creates home-school partnerships where trained parent educators work with parents of at-risk children in their homes and neighborhood schools. Florida also encourages the development of full-service schools—one-stop shopping for families where health, education and other services are available. California recognized through an assessment of family programming within the state education agency that it should do more to establish partnerships with community and family service agencies to benefit students and their families. The state department of education has made family education and support one of the components of its comprehensive parent involvement approach.

California's policy and programming reflect the understanding that parents have different needs and strengths and, therefore, schools must design programs that provide for multiple avenues of family involvement in the development of their children. There is a growing acceptance in many states that efforts must be made to include families at all levels of the child's education—pre-K through high school—and that lack of English proficiency or low- literacy levels should not be barriers to the parent's full involvement in the child's education. We now see this understanding translated into formal programs for parents of older children and programs that help schools create structures that are welcoming and supportive of all families.

In Alabama, the researcher participated in an "Active Parenting" class designed to improve family functioning. Some of the families attending had a history of family violence or child neglect and had been referred by the judicial system to receive family education. In Florida, the researcher observed a school that was reinventing itself using the family as a model. The school recognized itself as a workplace for staff and made policy and practice changes that accommodated staff parenting responsibilities. In California, a parent involvement coordinator spoke of strategies to address the concerns parents of varying ethnic backgrounds have for their children and the school. In Minnesota, local school district plans for a parent involvement program must include strategies for ensuring the full participation of parents or guardians, including those parents or guardians who lack literacy skills or whose native language is not English. Although there are programs tailored to families with the greatest needs, practitioners stress there is much more to be done if all children are to benefit from the supports provided through school/family partnerships.

As the need for family education and programming extends into the middle and secondary schools, its focus encompasses issues of student achievement in addition to child development and improved family function. Missouri is currently developing an extension of the PAT program for parents of children K-12. The new Missouri program will feature modules on learning styles, transition from primary to middle grades, school practices such as grading and tracking, and tips on working with your school. Other states are following this lead. California has endorsed parent involvement models and programs appropriate for parents with children of different ages and thus different

concerns and needs, as well as for parents of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Parent involvement is not the domain of any one unit of the state education agency; more frequently it is a function of many. We are witnessing efforts of state education agency curriculum specialists to inform families of important curriculum changes and provide information on how families can support student learning in specific subject disciplines. California has developed materials specifically for families about the English/language arts, mathematics, and history/social science curricula. Both Florida and Alabama have defined a role for parents in the development of plans to address the needs of dropouts and at-risk youth and to improve self-esteem and academic success. In Florida, the Family/School/Community Partnership Program is implemented through the Division of Vocational, Adult and Community Education under the aegis of the Home Economics Department.

Yet these are not necessarily disparate efforts. California has designated a Parenting and Community Education Office to coordinate the State Board of Education's comprehensive policy on parent involvement among all the departments of the education agency and with other agencies of government. In Florida, the parent involvement function is not centralized, but is driven by the vision and leadership of the education commissioner, who has initiated a major campaign employing the state education agency and other state agencies to promote involvement of families in schools. In Alabama, many offices of the state education agency will be involved in implementing the aspects of the Alabama Education Improvement Act that impact families and family involvement in education. In Minnesota, funding for in-service staff development encourages local school district investments in training methods and strategies for involving families in children's learning development.

In each of the states visited, family and community involvement are central to the success of the states' school reform and restructuring efforts. For instance, in California parent involvement arose in the context of the state's curriculum reform initiative and is linked to school improvement efforts statewide.

In Alabama major reforms in the education system have been proposed by the legislature. These reforms touch on areas as diverse as improvements in learner outcomes, changes in methods of teacher certification and student assessment, performance-based school accreditation, schools of choice, and site-based decision making among others. Alabama must depend on the support of the public and parents to realize the goals of this aggressive agenda.

In Florida, a key component of the state's school accountability system is the public reporting of school improvement and student performance based on parent and community input and review. Florida has also developed structures that support parent participation in this process. The law requires family representation on advisory committees that develop school and district planning and reporting documents. Advisory groups exist at many levels. These include school, area and district committees and a Florida School Council to provide assistance and leadership.

In Minnesota, reform efforts focus on outcome-based learning, student and family choice in determining educational options, school improvements, and decentralized authority and support for school site planning and decision making. These initiatives will require empowering parents to become active and informed participants.

Throughout the states, these policies and laws represent wedges of opportunity for parents to become active players in determining the quality of the education available to their children. Many parents will be willing and able to accept the challenge that these opportunities present. Many will not be. Similarly, many local education agencies will proceed to endorse and support increased parent involvement as a key ingredient of successful schools. Other school districts will require mandates, but more importantly, the support necessary to implement changes in the relationships and responsibilities of schools and families in education.

Although state funds for parent involvement initiatives are limited, state education agencies

are working creatively to provide supports to districts and schools. By making parental involvement an integral component of other efforts and using existing funds, states are making progress in addressing this need.

Materials development, information dissemination, conferences, and training of trainers workshops are key means of technical assistance to schools and districts. California has encouraged linkages between local school districts and non-profit organizations with expertise in parent involvement programming to support more intensive efforts at capacity building. Florida has embarked upon an extensive public relations and school recognition campaign to identify and reward family-friendly schools. Alabama uses its community educators to deliver in-service and pre-service training to local district personnel, parents and the staff of community organizations. Minnesota has relied on parent involvement, child advocacy and education policy organizations to support conferences and publications.

There is very little evaluation data available to assess the effectiveness of parent involvement initiatives and document their impact on school, student and family improvements. In many cases, states are just beginning to define their terms and establish comprehensive goals and approaches for parent involvement in education. School projects that have worked to improve the school-family partnership over time report better relations, greater acceptance and communication between the home and the school, and a feeling of empowerment among the stakeholders involved in the process.

Alabama is in the process of revamping its system of public education. The Alabama Education Improvement Act of 1991 will require broad changes in education across the state and offers new opportunities for families to participate in many aspects of schools and the education of their children.

The focus of the legislation is to improve standards and institute reforms to improve learner outcomes; change methods of teacher certification; increase requirements for high school graduation; institute promotion and retention standards; provide for alternate academic programs; improve student assessment; institute performance-based school accreditation; establish the Alabama Council on Family and Children (to coordinate existing services at the state and local levels supporting early childhood development and family involvement in education); require local school districts to develop schools of choice plans; provide special assistance for students deemed to be at-risk and/or dropouts; and promote site-based decision-making.

The change to performance-based school accreditation will require districts and schools to report to the public through an annual Report Card on their accreditation status, including performance criteria measures. Among these measures are parent satisfaction and parental involvement. The State Board of Education has also established a procedure whereby complaints can be lodged against any school or school system that is not in compliance with the performance-based standards.

The legislation provides for greater choice for parents and students in the kinds of public educational programs available. It also requires local school systems to develop plans to redirect the resources of the community education program to offer training programs for parents to assist them in addressing the needs of at-risk children and youth and "to further encourage parental involvement with all aspects of the total school program." The latter part of the legislation focuses on needs and programs to ensure school success for at-risk children and youth and is part of a strategy to reduce the

dropout rate and increase the graduation rate to 90 percent by the year 2000. The law also requires local school boards to encourage business leaders, community organizations and the public media to support education and to convince parents that education is critical to their children's' futures. Finally, the legislation calls for site-based decision making to be implemented in the schools which will offer new roles for families as decision makers.

Further guidance on the implementation of this law is still forthcoming; however, two strategies already in place in the state for improving public education and performance-based accreditation are described below and indicate more specifically the role that policy makers have created for families within this larger scheme of education reform.

Implementation of reform will require not only new policies and legislative action, but adequate levels of funding to poor school districts and greater empowerment of families to make public education work for all citizens of the state. Improved funding is critical since the per pupil expenditures for the state are among the lowest in the nation and there is great variability among the highest and the lowest expenditures per district. It is clear that the key to reform in the state must be a concerted effort of many stakeholders.

According to the State Board of Education:

> *Any real improvement in public education is dependent upon the willingness of local school boards, administrators, teachers, and parents to do all that is necessary to ensure quality education is available to all children. . . . Alabama has been virtually last in the amount of money spent for education for too long. True reform of the Alabama public system of education must contain changes in the funding of education. A commitment to improving education in Alabama must be felt by all her citizens; parents, teachers, legislators, business leaders, and all those who dream of a better tomorrow.*

The State Board has also recognized the need for parental choice options and has cited its relationship to school effectiveness and student achievement. The State Department of Education has been instructed to provide information and training to assist parents in making choices for theilr children—choices among non-accredited systems and accredited systems, system-wide magnet schools, residential schools within the state, area vocational schools, and/or post-secondary schools on a part-time basis while still in secondary education.

Prior to passage of the new state law, **Alabama's Plan for Excellence of 1984** was the state's blueprint for improving public education. A significant segment of the plan addressed how families should be involved with schools. The plan described a range of levels of involvement for families as: advisors, volunteers, and partners in the education of children by providing assistance in learning in the home and support for the school. The plan also stressed the importance of establishing a relationship between families and schools in which each are equal and complementary partners in achieving educational excellence.

The Plan for Excellence recommended:

> *Local school systems should develop plans to involve individual parents in the education of their children. Goals should be established and plans implemented which will draw the school and the parent together. Parental participation can be fostered in a number of ways: in-school activities, service on advisory committees, work in volunteer programs, career education, extracurricular activities and related programs.*
>
> *Schools should provide advice on the parent's responsibility in educating the student. Materials or community workshops should be considered as vehicles for communicating not only school needs but also methods for assisting and supporting instructional programs. Tips on assisting with homework, attendance, study methods, discipline, and health and nutrition will prove beneficial to the overall education of each student, as well as greatly enhance the parent's image of the school and the entire learning environment. It must be remembered that this is a two-way street, a partnership. While the school and school system gain the parent's support in the educational process, the school and system must be willing to*

listen and respond to the parents' feelings and suggestions. The beneficiary will be the student. **A Plan for Excellence: Alabama's Public Schools,** 1984.

Parent Involvement Plan

In support of **The Plan for Excellence,** a **Parent Involvement Plan** was developed and disseminated by the Community Education Office of the state education agency. It reflects the principle that broad school improvement cannot be realized without the involvement of families. **The Parent Involvement Plan** provides very specific guidance for initiating a family involvement program in districts, setting clear goals, and designing activities for meeting those goals. Among the suggested steps are:

1. Designate a key person as the parental involvement coordinator and State Department of Education contact. The key person should be readily available and able to serve for three years to insure program development continuity. Appoint a Parental Involvement Steering Committee composed of principal, teachers, PTA officials, parents and others. The Steering Committee should be involved in developing and implementing the school system's Parental Involvement Program.

2. Review present school-home communication methods and success.

3. Collect and review information from other school systems having parental involvement programs. (The Parent Involvement Plan contains descriptions of six model parental involvement programs and also directs districts to work cooperatively with local education agency Chapter 1 Coordinators.)

4. Use faculty meetings, pre-service and in-service training days to provide principal and teacher training programs on the importance of parental involvement, successful ways the school can communicate with parents, and benefits to teachers, children, parents, etc.

5. Survey parents and teachers regarding their needs and perceptions of parent participation. (A sample survey is included in the document.)

6. In coordination with existing parent involvement organizations (e.g. PTA) and based upon the results and the parents' and teachers' surveys, develop a minimum of three written parental involvement goals with appropriate objectives and implementation steps for each school.

The **Parent Involvement Plan** provides concrete samples of the types of goals and activities these plans should include. The samples also reflect the need to target special efforts to address specific school problems and needs. For example, a goal can address problems of poor academic achievement and target families of children who are having academic problems in school. A related activity might be to organize meetings to assist families in addressing their roles and responsibilities both in the school and in the home, at which time strategies for parents to help their children achieve better in the school setting could be presented. Another goal might be to reduce student absences through special efforts to communicate with families, make home visits and link families with community agencies that can address deeper needs of which student absences are merely symptomatic.

The **Parent Involvement Plan** illustrates some very essential components of successful family involvement efforts as viewed by the Alabama state education agency, including:

- The need to have someone at the school site who is responsible for the activity.

- The need for a long-term commitment to the effort by the person responsible for family involvement in the school.

- The need to provide oversight by a steering committee comprised of various stakeholders (e.g., principal, teachers, PTA representatives, parents and others).

- The recognition of various levels and types of family involvement.

- The adoption and adaptation of models used by other districts active in this area and participation of others trained in parent involvement (e.g., local Chapter 1 coordinators).

- The importance of teacher awareness and training in ways to improve family involvement.

Alabama Performance-Based Accreditation System

The Alabama Performance-Based Accreditation System was developed as a result of a State Board of Education resolution adopted on July 12, 1988. The System was to go into effect during the 1991-92 school year. It now has the sanction of the new law.

The System has several components that address family involvement. It requires that:

1. Each school has a plan for instructional improvement that provides at minimum for: high expectations for staff, students, and parents; collaboration; systematic monitoring of student progress; classroom observation of instruction; and in-service training to meet instructional needs.

2. The principal affords leadership opportunities to teachers, parents and students (e.g., shared decision-making, long-range planning, periodic needs assessments).

3. Schools develop and implement systematic procedures to enhance community and family involvement and support through joint planning and collaborative efforts.

The purpose of the plan for instructional improvement is to give direction to the instruction program and increase understanding between the school and community.

Community Education

In the midst of these changes within the educational system of the state involving new partnerships between schools and families, programs of community education continue their traditional roles as sustaining forces for many families and communities and bridges to community resources for the public schools. The state's community education network serves as an important vehicle for delivering family support, education and involvement services. Here, the focus of community education programs is targeted at improving family life and education and making the school the center of family activities. Community education provides a menu of programs and services for parents and children funded from a number of public, private, state and federal sources. Community education activities generally include:

- extended-day school programs
- tutorial programs for students
- volunteers to work in schools
- parent training and involvement programs
- adopt-a-school programs
- at-risk student programs
- resources for teachers
- school/home/community communications

In 1989-90, there were 60 school districts participating in community education. Statewide there were 77 full-time and 31 part-time community education coordinators and 3,998 community education teachers. Within these districts, there were: 47 K-12 tutorial programs serving over 10,000 students; 62 extended-day programs in 223 schools and serving over 14,000 students; 44 parent involvement programs serving over 10,000 parents; and 41 at-risk youth programs serving 16,000 students. Funding for Community

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Opportunities for extending home and school partnerships are inherent in many programs of community education as the following rationale for extended-day school programs provides:

By providing services for latchkey children, schools are increasing their contact time with the children in a positive, educationally enriched atmosphere. Attitudes toward education can be changed for the better. Homework, basic skills, remedial, and enrichment activities can be provided at the school. Parents who come to pick up their children in the evening can come into an educational institution to observe instruction, communicate with the teacher, and even assist their child or other children with learning. The parent's acceptance of their role and responsibility for their child's education can receive a tremendous boost through the extended-day school-age child care services.

Alabama Federal Dependent Care Grant Program: Final Report 1989-90

Education comes from state ($765,376), local ($8.1 million) and other ($1.3 million) sources.

The state education agency's Office of Community Education coordinates the federal and state funded projects administered through community education and supports a variety of family involvement activities across the state. The Office coordinates the 21 school districts with federal Dependent Care Grants to support extended-day programs in the schools. It conducts in-service training in family involvement for teachers, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and other groups. Pre-service activities have been undertaken at Auburn University's School of Education and with the Alabama Education Association.

Technical assistance to school districts has included the production and dissemination of materials and brochures ("What Every Child Needs" and "A Message to Parents" are popular publications produced by the state education agency); the provision of parent involvement activities and examples to teachers, administrators, community education coordinators and parents; and on-site visits to local districts. The Community Education Office maintains a resource collection which they share with local districts on family involvement in school improvement and effective schools research. It also functions as a resource to other state agencies and councils.

Finally, community education works to mobilize the business community in support of public schools. The state education agency office assists school districts in developing adopt-a-school partnerships with businesses which provide substantial educational supports to the schools. According to Bobbie Walden, state education agency community education coordinator, "Businesses are encouraged to go beyond the providing of pencils and other supplies to devote time, talent and expertise to strengthening the schools." Partnerships have been established in 90 of the 130 school systems in the state and in 883 schools.

The Community Schools Act, signed into law April 19, 1990 transformed 19 years of Community Education practices in Alabama into state law. The purpose of the Act is to encourage greater community involvement in the public schools, greater community use of public school facilities, and increased involvement of business and industry in every school system. It represents a strategy for changing the image of schools and expanding them to greater service to the community.

The Act provides for funding to support programs and plans in accordance with the purposes of the Act and requires the establishment by local boards of education of community school advisory committees. The role, scope and responsibility of the advisory committees, however, are limited to governance and improvement issues in community schools. Community schools advisory committees are directed to work with local school officials and personnel, parent-teacher organizations, community groups and agencies in providing maximum opportunities for public schools to serve the communities and in encouraging the maximum use of volunteers in the public schools.

In Alabama, community education is a vehicle for strengthening the K-12 program and providing family services that in other states might be assumed by other service agencies. Its efforts to educate and provide needed community services and involve businesses in the work of schools helps to improve the environment for education in the home and the quality of educational and social experiences for the child in the community. It also helps to broaden the base of support for public education called for by the State Board of Education.

School improvement, student support and enhanced student achievement, though not always articulated, are the byproducts of these efforts. Through these programs, children and parents receive academic and cultural enrichment; the home learning environment is supported through parenting education and advice on home learning activities; and encouragement and discussion center on ways to support the school and the child. This structure and focus offer a particular perspective on and mechanism for furthering family involvement

framed within a strong network of community education coordinators—each with strong ties to and understanding of the needs of their respective communities—in 60 districts statewide.

Local Parent Involvement Initiatives

Efforts to improve family involvement and provide family services in Alabama are deeply intertwined and community education is a grass roots activity that fosters involvement among many agencies in the community, families and schools. Different communities, however, in response to specific community needs, will have slightly different parent involvement goals, policies and programs. Butler County in a very rural area of the state and Montgomery County at the capital seat were visited to get an up close perspective on how community education programs function and how they support family involvement in these communities.

Butler County

Butler County is one of the poorest counties in the state. It also has the highest level of unemployment. Of the 21,600 people in the county, approximately 9,000 do not have high school diplomas or the GED.

The school system enrolls approximately 4,600 students at eight school sites. About 1,900 students are Chapter 1 eligible. Of these students, approximately 1,200 receive compensatory education services. The district student population is 58 percent African American and 42 percent white but proportions vary to as much as 70 percent white in some schools. In 1987, Butler County ranked near the bottom—125th out of 128 school systems in the state—in the percentage of the total school budget provided through local support.

The Superintendent of Schools in Butler County, Jimmy H. Lawrence, is grappling with the realities of very low property taxes available to support the schools and limited support of the schools by local business. He indicated that the one-fourth of county students from middle class homes are well motivated and graduate from high school. Many of these students leave the county after graduation. The remaining three-fourths of students are poor, at-risk and remain in the county creating an ever increasing cycle of poverty. The low level of formal education among parents and the lack of effective parenting skills among many parents compound the problems facing the schools.

Among strategies to address these needs, the school system is seeking a more equitable funding formula from the state; infusing technology into the schools to provide computer access for all students and to support student skill development; getting businesses to require a high school diploma or GED for potential employees; offering GED and basic education instruction at the work site; and offering parent education courses throughout the county.

The county has great demand for social and educational services for its citizens and limited resources to provide these services. Consequently, local education and other agency staff work to coordinate the resources that are available. Within this interplay, school nurses play a critical role in establishing linkages between the school and the home. Four school nurses provide health and drug prevention education to the students, offer in-school parenting classes, identify and refer high-risk students for health and human resources services, and conduct home visits. Because many families in the county do not have telephones, the school nurse often serves as a liaison between the home and the school.

Community Education

Butler County has a vigorous community education program under the leadership of Judy Manning, a very innovative and take-charge community educator. With great vivacity and

Last year, Linda Joiner, school nurse in Butler County, provided support to 42 pregnant or parenting students. Of these, five had more than one child. An eighth grader had three children; a 13 year-old had two children. Not surprisingly, the needs of these students are great. Linda routinely undertakes such tasks as securing a baby sitter for the 13-year-old so that she can attend school. She also helps to arrange medical services for these young women and provides in-home parenting education.

creativity she has been able to raise resources from a number of sources and combine these funds to provide very critical education, family and community services for the county. For example, library funds have been secured to purchase guidance kits and other resources for the extended-day and parent education programs. Additional support has been received from the Children's Trust Fund to work with teachers to help them identify signs of neglect and abuse and to work with students to keep them away from abusive situations. Drug education funds have been used to supply guidance counselors to work with students to build self-esteem and coping skills. Southeast Alabama Mental Health Program funds support parent education classes, counseling services and child care while parents attend these classes.

Judy Manning also serves as the district's attendance officer. Through this position, she is able to identify youth and parents experiencing problems with the judicial system, move them into community education parenting classes, and link them with other service providers.

Although much has been accomplished, much remains to be done to improve family involvement in the county. Community education would like to support greater outreach into the homes to provide education and services, especially for young mothers. Given the low-literacy rate in the county, it is important to reach parents and children early to provide education and services before children get conditioned to poverty.

Parent Education

Community education sponsored parent education classes are offered in the evenings two hours per week for six-week sessions. They are held in local schools and churches. Parent educators drawn from the counseling and teaching staff in the county select materials appropriate to the literacy levels of parents. The "Active Parenting" series explores concepts of good parenting and family structures that contribute to improved family decision making, self esteem and cohesiveness. This approach has been found to be more effective with higher-literacy-level families (8.9 grade level and above). The Ruth Bowdoin Method which has basically the same goals provides materials and activities more appropriate for lower literacy level parents. An Active Parenting for teens has recently been initiated in the district.

Regardless of the specific materials used, the value of home support for children's learning and school involvement is stressed. Strategies are provided for reading to children and converting everyday tasks and activities into learning experiences. The goal is to develop family trust in education and the school and to create a family constituency that supports student achievement.

Montgomery County

Community education also serves critical needs for family education and support activities in Montgomery County. The program, in cooperation with the Montgomery Public Schools and the

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The researcher observed a parenting class for adults held at the Robert L. Austin Elementary School in Georgiana, Alabama. The class was comprised of five couples and two single parents. Two of the couples were referrals of the courts for child abuse and truancy. Child care is provided during the session.

The instructor is a certified counselor. Her goal is to empower parents through knowledge about their parental responsibilities to develop new skills and new ways of addressing family problems. The curriculum she uses is based on the "Active Parenting" series and covers a number of topics for better parenting such as developing responsibility, discipline, democratic family decision-making, and supporting your child in school. That evening, parents and instructor had a very spirited discussion around the topic of holding family meetings. Following the formal class, parents talked informally over refreshments about many of their family concerns and shared information about their children's accomplishments and awards in school. The instructor took this opportunity to stress the importance of family involvement in their children's schools and ways to organize family time to support greater learning in the home.

Children's Trust Fund of Alabama, runs a "Parents as Teachers" Program which targets teenage parents. According to the program literature:

> *The number of students to be served by this program is staggering, and some teenagers already have more than one child. Because these children of young mothers will soon be in the school system themselves, we have chosen this group to target, hoping to make an impact and help break the cycle.*

The program is being implemented in four high schools and targets 20 to 30 students per school. Jefferson Davis High School, one of the program schools, is described below.

According to Joy Lambert, Montgomery County Community Education Coordinator,

> *A number of successes have resulted from the program. Several students were planning to dropout because they could not get child care. Others had transportation problems and could not get to medical appointments. Some did not understand that they are eligible for AFDC support and had not received these services. The program has helped these youth to receive the services they need. Although its focus is on improving parenting skills, the program stresses the importance of the young parent obtaining a high school degree. The goal of the program is to support pregnant and parenting youth so that they may complete their education.*

Jefferson Davis High School

The researcher met with the principal and nurse at Jefferson Davis High School and attended a session of "Parents as Teachers". The school has an enrollment of about 2000 students and is racially balanced under a desegregation order. Its attendance boundaries are large and many students are bussed from the far boundaries of the district.

According to the principal, the school has a fairly active parent organization. Parents serve as volunteers, conduct teacher appreciation activities, raise funds for the school and serve in booster capacities for the band and athletics program. He welcomes parent input on how the school can better relate to their children and views parent involvement as having a direct impact on the curriculum and the school's ability to generate funds. He indicated that there are many parents—particularly those from public housing areas—whose children are bussed to the school and who never set foot in the school building during the course of their child's experience in the high school. Involvement among these parents is particularly poor. He feels this can be attributed primarily to transportation problems. There is no program in the school designed to provide outreach to these parents.

The "Parents as Teachers" class observed was the second meeting of a group of about 25 students, three were males and all but three were African Americans. The session was held during regular school time. To attend, students had to leave their regular academic courses. The instructor indicated that she would like to hold parenting classes which do not conflict with regular classes, but to date she has not been able to make other arrangements with the school.

The session featured a film about the responsibilities of parenting young children and the changes in relationships between men and women during pregnancy and shortly after the birth of a child. The class instructor provided facts on teen pregnancy rates in Alabama, talked about free prenatal and delivery services for low-income mothers provided through the Gift of Life Foundation, and outlined the schedule of home visits for one-on-one counseling and parent education instruction for the students.

Gift of Life is a private foundation which provides funds to the Public Health Department to run prenatal clinics and supports school nurses in the junior and senior high schools. Traditionally, Montgomery County has had only limited school nurse service and this service has largely been dedicated to the needs of students in special education programs.

Summary

Alabama is a state experiencing major transitions in school reform and the structure of its entire system. An expanded role for parents encompassing many types of involvement is described in the new Alabama Education Improvement Act of 1991. Alabama's extensive

community education network provides family education and support services and bridges community and school needs. It will be a good resource to build from in expanding the new role for parent involvement as previewed by the new law.

To fully implement its education reforms, the state will need a strong base of family and community support. Through community education, the state is building a strong constituency for public education, yet there is much left to be done. In addition to providing family education and providing technical assistance to local school districts in building parent involvement programs, there is much work to be done at the secondary school level to provide outreach to parents of all ages, ethnic backgrounds and income levels to ensure their involvement in schools and the education of their children.

California has a well-articulated strategy for improving family involvement in schools. This strategy is set forth in a state policy which details six types of parent involvement—each of which is integral to establishing comprehensive parent involvement programs in school districts and schools. By targeting not one but several forms of family involvement, schools can structure programs which address the needs and interests of a large number of parents and, therefore, marshall greater support in reaching the goal of improved student success. The policy is based on research and the agency's agenda for school reform.

In addition to a state policy, the state education agency has put in place mechanisms to guide districts in the design of family policies and the implementation and evaluation of family involvement programs. Key to the implementation activities is the Parenting and Community Education Office, whose staff of two full-time professionals provide leadership and support to local school districts in developing comprehensive, continuing

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The California State Board of Education Parent Involvement Policy endorses six types of family involvement necessary to produce a comprehensive parental involvement approach for parents of all children at all grade levels. Comprehensive programs should be designed to:

1) help parents develop parenting skills and foster conditions at home that support children's efforts in learning;

2) provide parents with the knowledge of techniques designed to assist their children in learning at home;

3) provide access to and coordinate community and support services for children and families;

4) promote clear two-way communication between the school and the family concerning school programs and children's progress;

5) involve parents providing training if necessary so they can assume instructional and support roles at the school; and

6) support parents as decision makers and develop their leadership in governance, advisory, and advocacy roles.

programs of parent and community involvement. The Office coordinates and facilitates the implementation of the State Board of Education's policy on parent involvement and legislation that promotes the involvement of families and volunteers with the schools.

The state education agency has also created an intra-departmental committee on parental involvement. The committee is composed of representatives of each unit in the department that provides parent involvement services to school districts, schools and families. Representatives from the following units of the state education agency are members of the committee: American Indian Education, Curriculum Framework, Educational Options (alternative education), History-Social Science, Parenting and Community Education, Special Education, Child Development, Migrant Education, Math/Science, Language Arts/ Foreign Languages, Compensatory Education, School Climate, School Interventions, Bilingual Education, Middle Grades, Healthy Kids, and the University and College Opportunity Program. The committee meets quarterly to review parent involvement activities of the department, coordinate services to districts and schools, plan staff development and evaluation activities, and ensure that all activities support the state board policy. This group is working to design a statewide plan for parent involvement. An interagency partnership committee composed of department staff and representatives of state health, youth and social service agencies also meets quarterly to design ways of collaborating more effectively with school districts and families to support the state board policy.

Finally, California also has a law that provides clear incentives for development and expansion of parental involvement policies and programs in school districts in keeping with the state policy. The law, which went into effect in January of 1991, requires school districts receiving federal Chapter 1 funds, and schools that receive state funds for implementation of school improvement plans or economic impact aid to

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Assembly Bill 322

Effective January 1, 1991, California lawmakers passed new legislation mandating parental involvement. The law:

1. Requires school districts receiving federal Chapter 1 funds to establish parent involvement programs.
2. Makes the establishment of a parental involvement program a condition of receiving state funding for both Economic Impact Aid and the School Improvement Program;
3. Requires that each parent involvement program contain specified components including the following:

   The provision of regular training and information on:

   - home activities, strategies and materials that can be used to assist and enhance students' learning at home and at school;
   - positive discipline and skills to build healthy relationships with children; and
   - consistent and effective communications between school and the parents concerning the progress of the children in school and school programs;

   The development of an annual statement outline of program objectives and an annual review of those objectives.

   Parental involvement in the evaluation of the Chapter 1 program.

4. Requires that governing boards of school districts not receiving Chapter 1 funds adopt policies on parental involvement consistent with specific purposes and goals including:

   Engaging parents positively in their children's education by helping parents to develop skills to use at home that support their children's academic efforts at school and promote their children's development as responsible future members of our society;

   Informing parents that they can directly affect the success of their children's learning, by providing parents with techniques and strategies that they may use to improve their children's academic success and to assist their children in learning at home;

   Building consistent and effective communication between the home and the school so that parents may know when and how to assist their children in support of classroom learning activities;

   Training teachers and administrators to communicate effectively with parents; and

   Integrating parental involvement programs, including compliance with this law, into the school's master plan for academic accountability.

5. Permits school districts to contract with non-profit organizations and agencies experienced in administering parent involvement programs to design and implement their parent involvement program.

6. Permits school districts to seek reimbursement of any mandated costs through the statutory claims process.

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establish parent involvement programs. For schools not receiving Chapter 1 funds, districts are required to adopt policies on parent involvements consistent with the goals of the legislation.

Both the policy and the law reflect a role and a vision of parental involvement that are central to efforts to improve schools and student achievement. The policy did not arise from a general need to have better parental involvement in California's schools but as a critical component of the state's ongoing curriculum reform initiative. The state law makes establishment of a parental involvement program a condition of receiving state funding for poor performing schools and those with special resource needs and also links school districts not receiving Chapter 1 aid into the larger state policy initiative.

Thus, parental involvement as articulated in state policy and law is a tool for advancing the state department of education's major goal of improving student success and learning and enhancing the capacities of schools to achieve this goal. By designating the responsibility for parental involvement activities to a unit within the state education agency and assigning responsibility for coordinating intra-agency and inter-agency efforts, the law has been provided a strong foundation of support for improving parental involvement throughout the state. The law also provides for supports for implementation by permitting school districts to contract with organizations and agencies to design and implement their parent involvement programs and receive reimbursement of mandated costs through the statutory claims process.

Surrounding these efforts is an environment rich in resources to support and enable state efforts. California has many organizations and projects working to advance the successful interaction of families and schools. Several of these projects are known nationwide for a number of reasons including: their impact on helping parents to support instruction and achievement (e.g., Family Math); their successful implementation in large cities with low-income and minority parents (e.g. Project AHEAD); and their success in creating school processes and procedures for improved school-home communication and parent empowerment (e.g, Quality Education Project).

The state has not made specific funds available for its parent involvement initiative. Rather, it has used the policy, a designated office within the Department of Education, and the law as mechanisms for advancing parent involvement

statewide. Available resources come from privately funded or locally supported projects, Chapter 1 and school improvement funds.

State Policy

The parent involvement policy adopted by the State Board of Education on January 13, 1989 evolved out of a process initiated by the Parenting and Community Education Unit in 1988. This process altered and improved the way in which family involvement was viewed and implemented in the state.

First, each unit of the state education agency outlined its present activities that involve families. This process yielded a list of activities that fit in four categories of family involvement:

1) involvement in governance at the school level to provide advice on school policies and programs; 2) involvement as clients receiving services through the school (e.g., enrolled in a child rearing instructional program); 3) involvement as assistants to teachers (e.g., instructional aides or classroom volunteers); and 4) involvement in assisting their children in learning in the home. Among these documented areas of involvement, the most prevalent dealt with family participation in governance, particularly activities relating to federal and state regulations for family involvement on school and program councils.

These findings were then compared with research on parent involvement and its effects on school and student improvement. According to Zelma P. Solomon, past coordinator, Parenting and Community Education Office,

> *A review of parent involvement activities revealed that the state department of education was not providing enough leadership to help schools involve parents in the two types of activities that most directly support the state's major goal of improving the curriculum: involving parents in learning activities with their children at home and establishing partnerships with community and family service agencies to benefit students and their families.* (January 1991, p.360)

As a result, the state education agency took steps to address this lack of leadership and to develop a more effective and comprehensive parental involvement policy. An initial advisory committee was formed of researchers, district and school administrators, teachers, community representatives, parents and state staff who were committed to school improvement. The State Board of Education and State Superintendent recognized the committee's role in policy development and publicly announced their support and intent to approve a policy statement. The committee, fully armed with up-to-date information from research and practice, developed a consensus on parent involvement that reflected the Department's major goals for school reform. An action plan will be completed shortly as a result of collaboration with the State Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Parent Involvement described below.

The research base and the principles on which the policy statement are founded are evident in its preamble:

> *A critical dimension of effective schooling is parent involvement. Research has shown that students learn better if, in addition to being provided a good instructional program, they receive the continuing support of parents and other adults. Research has also shown that, regardless of the communities they serve, schools can develop effective programs to involve parents in the education of their children. The inescapable fact is that consistently high levels of student success are unlikely without long-term family support and reinforcement of the school's curricular goals. . . . The major goal of the initiative is to promote greater student success in all curriculum areas by making schools and parents more productive partners in the education of children.*

The principles cited above—an affirmation that effective parental involvement programs can be developed for all parents, the need for long-term family support and reinforcement of curriculum goals, the benefits of having schools and parents as productive partners—make California's policy an exemplary one. In addition to including many different components, it is unique among state policies in the commitment to programs and practices that support all parents—not just the parents of targeted groups of students (e.g., young, Chapter 1, at-risk or special needs children). Also important is recognition in the

policy that programs must be developed in collaboration with parents and in recognition of their diverse cultures, languages and needs as well as their common interest in the educational success of their children. In recognition of the diversity of the state's population, the policy has been printed in English, Spanish and Chinese. Finally, the policy includes a commitment to districts and schools on the level of support and specific types of activities to be supplied by the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education.

Implementation Activities and Technical Assistance

According to Vivian C. Burton, Coordinator, Parenting and Community Education Office, activities for 1990-91 centered on assisting local districts to adopt policies in line with the state policy and to make parent involvement a legitimate part of each district's service to schools and parents. Districts were encouraged to consider what needs to happen in schools to change academic achievement, student behaviors and school attendance patterns and what role improved parent involvement can pay in supporting these changes. Districts have focused on different aspects of parent involvement. Only a few have implemented all six types of parent involvement to date.

This prompted the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish a statewide Advisory Committee on Parent Involvement in February 1991. The group, made up of 22 teachers, principals, school board members, local superintendents, and parent and business representatives, examined critical issues, set goals, and developed recommendations for parent involvement in California schools. The committee's report will be published in The California Strategic Plan for Parent Involvement, 1991.

Developing a District Policy

The Department created guidelines for the development of policies on parent involvement for county and district superintendents. The September 1990 advisory to local districts provides highlights of research that stress the strong impact of parent involvement on the educational achievement of all students. Also emphasized in the advisory are issues to be considered in the policy development process. A suggested process that is strongly reflective of the process used in developing the state policy is also included.

Suggested Steps for Local Policy Development

Step 1: Forming an Advisory Committee

Use existing committees with broad-based representation or recruit and select key administrators, teachers, parents, and community representatives who are deeply committed to school improvement and can make direct contributions to the development of a policy on parent involvement. Recruit consultant or policy committee chairperson with specific skills, techniques, and strategies to enhance the policy formulation process.

Step 2: Communicating Committee's Role

Clarify the Committee's role in the policy development process. Consensus on responsibilities and procedures for giving input should be reached.

Step 3: Developing Awareness

Provide training to the Advisory Committee on the State Board of Education Policy on Parent Involvement and on relevant research that links student achievement and parent involvement. Familiarizing the Committee with the State Board Policy and research will help underscore the specific roles that families can play in the education of their children.

Step 4: Assessing Needs

Conduct a careful review and appraisal of the effectiveness of current district policies, procedures, and programs that support parent involvement using a variety of forums, e.g. interviews, site visitations, and written surveys. Identify needs related to the development of a district policy.

Step 5: Drafting a Policy

Review facts and information gathered, set clear and measurable goals that conform to the district's educational philosophy, and reach

consensus on content of policy. Include recommendations for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the policy.

Step 6: Recommending the Proposed Policy

Give the proposed policy to the legal office to evaluate before presenting the policy to the Superintendent. Unless revisions are suggested by the Superintendent, the policy will be recommended to the local Board of Education for review and approval. The review and approval process may differ, depending on the requirements of the Board.

Step 7: Disseminating the Adopted Policy

Publicize the policy in local newspapers and in district and school newsletters. Distribute policy information to school and community organizations.

Step 8: Translating the Policy into Action

Develop a plan to implement the policy at all grade levels. A starting point would be to derive consensus from educators and parent representatives on a comprehensive plan to increase student achievement through parent involvement. To benefit schools and families, the plan should include practical suggestions and strategies for implementing and evaluating parent involvement activities based upon district assessment data, district goals and the six types of parent involvement outlined in the State Board of Education Policy on Parental Involvement.

Districts may want to utilize existing staff to coordinate their programs and provide leadership to schools. Program coordinators who share beliefs, attitudes and practices that foster meaningful parent involvement are likely to prove successful in motivating teachers and administrators to explore new practices and strategies on parent involvement.

Support of parent involvement in the form of materials and training for educators and parents can come from existing district funds, grants, Chapter 1 and School Improvement Program allocations. Districts may begin in-service training efforts at no cost by utilizing the services and support provided by the California Department of Education.

Promising Programs and Resources for Structuring Comprehensive Parent Involvement Programs

In addition to guidance to local districts on how to develop their own policies, the Department of Education has provided information on useful programs and resources to tap in formulating their programs. The Department recently disseminated a publication cataloging parent involvement programs in California public schools. The document contains a representative sample of programs divided into the six types of parent involvement as outlined in the State Board of Education policy. The first and largest section of the document cites programs operating at the local level. The second section describes other parent involvement program resources or programs operating within the districts. The final section details parent involvement services obtainable from the California Department of Education.

Parent Involvement Program Resources Available to Districts

The State Department of Education identifies and endorses a number of organizations and services throughout the state with programming in parent involvement that may be useful to districts in the development and implementation of parent involvement programs. These resources provide parent education, support and involvement services. They also provide strategies that are appropriate for parents with children of different ages and thus different concerns and needs, as well as for parents of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

- The **Center for the Improvement of Child Caring** develops, tests, and disseminates model parent training programs. These programs target parents of young children and of adolescents and parents of different ethnic/linguistic groups.

- The **Family Math Program** is designed to permit parents and their children to attend courses together and learn math through activities that can be repeated at home.

- **Family Wellness** is a family enrichment program. It offers a 12-hour Family Wellness basic course in which patterns found repeatedly in well-functioning families are taught.

- **Parents On Your Side** provides parent involvement workshops for educators featuring skills to gain parental support for academic, disciplinary and homework programs.

- The **PEP Campaign** (Parents Empowering Parents) focuses on the power of the parent-teacher organizations to empower parents.

- **Project AHEAD** (Accelerating Home Education and Development) is an educational program which recognizes the role of the parent as one of the most fundamental and critical factors in determining the academic achievement of children. The purpose of the program is to build strong partnerships between parents and schools in communities where children's academic achievement has fallen below national and district wide educational norms. Parents are given assistance in developing home lifestyles that support and promote their children's educational development.

- **Project Self-Esteem** is a program for grades kindergarten through six. It is designed to be taught in the classroom by a team of parents.

- **Quality Education Project** (QEP) engages parents and educators in partnerships to improve home-school communication and increase school success. Key elements include a parent pledge, weekly folders of student work, parent education seminars, staff development activities, a focus on reading in the home, community outreach ,and secondary-level parent involvement.

- **Baby and Me** is a school-based teen parenting program that provides teen parents and teaching staff with up-to-date, research-based information on parenting and nutrition issues.

- **Kindergarten Prep** Program helps parents of four-year-olds play with their children in ways that promote their development and their social and intellectual readiness for kindergarten. The program also helps parents become willing and effective partners with school personnel in promoting their children's educational achievement.

Workshops and Institutes

Regional workshops for administrators, teachers and parents were held across the state to introduce the policy and to bring information about successful practices to schools and school districts. As local districts have begun to structure their own policies, the Parent and Community Education Office has worked closely to support local workshops and institutes.

To provide special support to Chapter 1 Program Improvement Schools, the Department sponsored four institutes in Fall 1990 for teams from those schools. The strategy was to create a cadre of trainers who could provide training for parents and staff at the local school on ways parents can improve children's success in school.

The institutes were held on two Saturdays. Participants received training guides and support materials on eight workshop topics. Workshop topics and descriptions were:

- Family Reading (Elementary) - designed to help adults improve skills in reading to children and to develop strategies to improve their own literacy skills.

- Family Study Skills (Elementary and Secondary) - intended to help families improve student study and writing skills and learn how to empower students to use these skills for academic improvement.

- Designing Effective Homework and Home Learning Activities (Elementary and Secondary) - included features of quality homework, strategies that schools have found essential in minimizing homework hassles, and support systems for parents and students in home-learning to improve student success.

- Parent-Teacher Conferencing Skills - intended to introduce staff and parents to the elements of successful conferencing, strategies for preparing both parents and staff for effective conferencing, and role plays to develop and practice conferencing skills.

- Parent-Teacher Partnership and Communication Strategies - designed for

building partnerships, overcoming barriers, reporting pupil progress and maintaining on-going communications.

- Classroom Visitations and Observations - included strategies for opening the classroom to parents for visitations and observation and developing ways in which visitations and observations can be used to strengthen student behavior and academic achievement.

- Building Family Self-Esteem-discussed techniques and strategies that foster confidence and self-esteem in family members to support the learning and achievement for children.

- Discipline for Home and School - presented ways to help children and youth to develop self-control and parents and staff to develop assertive discipline techniques.

Additionally, each team received multiple copies of workshop resource materials in sets of 30 to share with parents in their schools, such as Project Self-Esteem books in English and Spanish and literature to supplement the Family Reading program training module for elementary schools. State education agency staff and consultants provided follow-up assistance to help school teams design implementation plans for the parenting workshops that they agreed to conduct during the 1990-91 school year.

Parent Education to Support Curriculum Reform

The State Department of Education staff has also developed booklets that include information on what parents should know about the English/language arts, mathematics, and history/social science programs. The publications offer tips on how parents can helps students succeed in these subjects and are designed to inform and encourage complement the state's curriculum reform initiative. Following is a description of one of the publications.

The Changing Language Arts Curriculum: A Booklet for Parents (1990) is designed to inform parents of important changes taking place in schools in reading instruction which make reading one part of an integrated language arts curriculum that teaches listening, speaking, reading and writing as one discipline rather than as separate subjects. Strategies are recommended for ways parents and educators can work together to develop students' appreciation of reading and writing and apply language arts skills to real-life situations. Specific home reinforcing activities are recommended (e.g. talking about shared experiences, listening to your child read, introducing your child to materials available from the library), as are strategies for ensuring success at school (e.g., visit your child's classroom to see how your child is developing language arts skills; attend parent involvement workshops on language arts).

The booklet describes the language arts curriculum at specific grade levels, what an effective program should include, and informs parents about what students at each grade level should be capable of doing in the language arts.

Local Parent Involvement Programs

The researcher visited Pacific, John Sloat and John Bidwell Schools in the Sacramento City School District for a first hand view of parent involvement in the district.

Following is a description of parent involvement in Pacific Elementary School.

Pacific Elementary School has been identified by the state as being in need of school improvement based on low student achievement scores. It has a pre-K through sixth grade enrollment of 700 students and a high-mobility rate among the student body. The student body is about one-third Asian-American, one-third Latino, and two-fifths African American. The remainder are white and other ethnic group students. The school is one of 30 local schools identified by the district to participate in an innovative parent involvement project.

According to Elaine Freedman, who is Coordinator of Parent Involvement for the District and oversees the activities of the 30 parent involvement project schools, the project was introduced into the school one year ago. At the time, the school also received a new principal, a seasoned

educator who knew the value of solid parent involvement in a school. Since that time, the principal and the site coordinator (an experienced teacher on the school's staff and well recognized member of the community) with the help of district staff have radically changed the pattern of parent involvement in the school. The school has gone from having little or no parent involvement to having as many as 60 to 90 parents in attendance at workshops and other school activities.

The innovative parent involvement project provides many structured ways for schools to communicate with parents on a routine basis. Folders of students' work are sent home with children each week for sharing with and updating parents on student progress and areas for improvement. Other resources help staff structure school and classroom newsletters, parent-teacher conferences and other mechanisms for communicating with and informing families about student and school concerns. On-site coordinators organize parent education seminars and staff development activities as well as community outreach programs. At Pacific, the site coordinator is paid a stipend for these extra duties.

At the beginning of the school year, the principal, district parent coordinator and site coordinator met to lay out a specific plan of activities. This has resulted in:

- Special arrangements that allow parents to check out books from the school library and use the computer lab which is open for use before and after school hours;
- Family Night, a series of workshops held the second Thursday of every month with a focus on various instructional issues such as reading strategies to try in the home, and the High Scope program of early childhood education;
- The use of translators (Spanish and Hmong) for these workshops and translating notices about parent meetings and school activities into the home languages of the school (nine native languages are represented in the student body and their families);
- Weekly folders of students' work, which are eagerly anticipated by families and represent welcomed points of dialogue between teachers and parents;
- A systematic effort to involve parents in a variety of volunteer roles such as designing bulletin boards, supporting classroom instruction, serving as resident musicians and artists; and
- Access to community and social services through the school's counselor, social worker and child study teams (composed of resource specialists, speech therapists, nurse, and classroom teachers).

According to Lillian Passmore, the site coordinator, in initiating programs and relationships with families, it is important to consider the cultural differences and to develop materials and strategies that are sensitive to these differences. For example, she finds that among families of Southeast Asian descent, male family members tend to take the lead in interacting with the school. Fathers tend to be available for school activities in the evenings. School parent involvement activities should be sensitized to and reflective of these realities.

Summary

California has stressed a comprehensive approach to parent involvement that embraces multiple types and levels of involvement. Legislation supports state policy that all districts and schools provide comprehensive programs, with special focus on the need for effective parent involvement in low-performing schools. California has staffed an office responsible for facilitating the implementation of the policy and the law. This office also motivates and coordinates efforts within the department and across state agencies in support of parent involvement. California's policy was created to provide greater support for its curriculum restructuring efforts.

FLORIDA

Florida has a strong legal and policy framework to promote a range of family involvement efforts throughout the state. Family and community are central to many of the state education agency's school restructuring efforts and its new education accountability system. The purpose of the accountability system is to improve student performance outcomes by defining what students know and assessing how well they have learned. Two key components of this system are: the public reporting of school improvement and student performance based on parent, business and community input and review; and collaborative efforts among schools, other agencies, community and parents to address the health, social and educational needs of the child. State legislation and policy provide mechanisms that ensure family and community involvement in developing school plans and assessing progress toward school improvement goals.

State legislation and policy also support a strong role for the business sector in school improvement, individual student progress and achievement. Policies also encourage state education agency employees to fulfill their school parental involvement responsibilities. Finally, the goal of family-friendly schools has been made a public relations focus and model efforts to create family centered and full-service schools have become a reality.

The Commissioner of Education has made family and community involvement a centerpiece of state education agency activities. She is committed to maximizing Florida's capital investment in its schools by using them in a comprehensive manner. The state education agency is therefore promoting the use of school sites to bring together education, health and social services and to coordinate them in the context of family needs.

The policies of the state education agency also parallel many of the Governor's policies related to improved school accountability, early childhood intervention and comprehensive on-site services available to children and families in schools. These policies in concert with the legal framework assure a sustaining environment for programs and services which support family well-being and promote family and community involvement in the schools.

Much of the impetus for recent policies within the state education agency stems from a visit by the Commissioner to Japan in 1989 to study the education system there. Impressed by the deeply rooted family commitment to education in Japan—a commitment that virtually assures student success in school—the Commissioner launched a major campaign to promote involvement of families in schools. The campaign has resulted in the state education agency looking at its own policies and programs which support family and community involvement in schools (starting with policies that support their own employees' involvement as parents), as well as the policies and programs of other state agencies.

Legal Framework

In addition to the policies and programs of the state education agency, Florida has several pieces of legislation which provide a larger framework for ensuring that families are informed participants in the process and dialogue of school improvement. The framework is strengthened by mechanisms that encourage private sector and community support for schools and innovations within schools with the goal of improving services and student achievement.

District and School Advisory Committees

Florida law (Section 229.58, Florida Statutes) requires district school boards to establish school advisory committees or district advisory committees. These committees must be broadly representative of the community served and include teachers, students, parents and other citizens. If the school board establishes advisory committees at every school, it may also establish a district advisory committee comprised of representatives of each school committee or such other members as the school board prescribes. Some large districts have created a middle layer between school and district advisory committees, sometimes referred to as an area advisory committee. Another variation is the feeder pattern advisory committee, which represents the schools that feed into a high school.

The district school board sets the functions of the advisory committees—functions which

District advisory committees are well organized in many parts of the state and operate as liaisons between the community and the school system, provide forums for the discussion and study of district education issues, encourage parent and community involvement, and assist in the development of the district annual school report.

cannot infringe upon those duties reserved by law to the district school board. The statute further requires the school advisory committees to assist school boards and schools in preparing legislatively required school planning and reporting documents such as the volunteer program plan, annual report, the comprehensive plan as requested by the principal, and to develop proposals that may be submitted for educational improvement projects.

The annual school report must be published by November 1 of each school year, reproduced and distributed to the parent or guardian of each student in the school and made available to all other interested citizens upon request. This annual report card on the status of the school is based upon information on how well the school is meeting its goals and objectives; an analysis of student progress toward performance standards; comparative school rankings based on student performance with other schools in the district; information on student attendance, including an analysis of progress made toward identifying potential dropouts and remedying the problem, incidents of corporal punishment, in-school and out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions; fiscal information including the school budget; information on the needs of the school and its students; and summaries of teacher, student, parent and community attitudes toward the school.

To ensure the effective functioning of the advisory committees, the State Commissioner of Education has created the Florida School Advisory Council to provide advice and leadership to school and district advisory committees. The Florida School Advisory Council is composed of representatives of advisory committees from the state's geographical regions as well as representatives of the ECIA Chapter 1 Advisory Council, Florida Chamber of Commerce, Florida PTA, State Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Programs, and the Sunshine State School Public Relations Association. Members are appointed by the Commissioner for a term of two years.

Among its responsibilities, the Council develops a pool of trainers to train school and district advisory committee members; assists the State Department of Education in developing and implementing an annual statewide conference for advisory councils; and develops and periodically revises a resource guide for school advisory committees. The Council has set up a Statewide Citizens Advisory Network to serve as a link between the Department of Education and the public, and to provide information, training, coaching and other kinds of support to school advisory committees. It also provides leadership in assisting local councils with developing school annual reports and school budgets and helps to coordinate and support the work of advisory committees, PTAs and other grass roots efforts to effect education policy. Finally, the Council lobbies on behalf of public education in the state and works to build a more positive image for advisory committees and an increasing citizen role in education policy.

Public/Private Partnerships

The Office of Business and Citizen Partnerships was established in 1987 through the Florida Private Sector and Education Partnership Act. The purpose of this Act is to encourage private sector partnerships for improvements in public education. Through this Office, the Department works to formalize business partnerships and support them administratively. The Office also works with employers to help them leverage their influence in improving parent involvement by giving employees release time to visit their child's school.

Dropout Prevention

A third component of the legislative framework to promote family involvement is the Dropout Prevention Act of 1986. This law authorizes school districts to develop and implement comprehensive dropout prevention programs.

These programs are designed to meet the needs of students who are not effectively served by conventional education programs in the public school system. As part of that plan, each district is asked to describe the parental, community and business involvement in the dropout prevention program. Each comprehensive plan for dropout prevention has an underlying theme of using parental and family involvement to promote and enhance students' self-esteem and academic success.

Strategies to Promote and Expand Family Involvement

In addition to legislation enabling greater family and community involvement in education, Florida is using a number of other strategies to promote and expand family involvement. These strategies include public relations and recognition efforts, interagency task force initiatives, and specific programming to support family involvement across units of the state education agency.

Public Relations and Recognition

In 1990, the Public Education Awareness Committee, made up of members of the Sunshine State School Public Relations Association and representatives from the Department of Education developed a public relations campaign to promote a family and school alliance that would enhance student success. Each of Florida's 65 school districts was asked to participate in a partnership with the Public Education Awareness Committee. The committee provided information, campaign materials, advice and coordination between state and local efforts.

The first phase of the campaign, "Red Carpet Schools: Families Welcome!," focused on training and awareness among educators to ensure a friendly, welcoming school atmosphere for families. Each district was asked to form district steering committees to direct the campaign locally. In order to be eligible for the Red Carpet designation, schools had to meet specific criteria (see box). The strategy was to recognize schools that were family friendly and to serve as motivation for other schools to make substantive changes in employee attitudes, programs and facilities for establishing a family friendly atmosphere. Schools with "Red Carpet" designation received a special certificate, decals, a letter from the Commissioner and a special announcement or celebration ceremony conducted by the district. As of spring 1991, 800 of the 2,500 schools in the state had received Red Carpet designation and 500 more were awaiting designation.

The second phase of the campaign targeted family members and was designed to engender

Criteria for Red Carpet School Designation

- ❒ Have you conducted a random survey to determine family attitudes?
- ❒ Are your physical facilities responsive to and available to family/community?
- ❒ Is a friendly, welcoming atmosphere created by your entire staff?
- ❒ Do you provide opportunities for parenting education?
- ❒ Do you provide opportunities for family involvement in the learning process?
- ❒ Do you have a parent/community group participating in the advisory function in your school?
- ❒ Do you have scheduled formal opportunities for parent/community visitations?
- ❒ Do you produce a periodic publication for family/community?
- ❒ Do you have a system of ongoing personal communication between the school (teacher) and the family?
- ❒ Are family/community involved in general goal setting?
- ❒ Are you sensitive to and do you accommodate families of students with special needs?
- ❒ List strategies used to reach family/community.

greater responsibility for and knowledge about ways of being involved in school and their child's education. This phase was launched at the beginning of the 1990-91 school year. The third aspect of the campaign was the production of a resource notebook containing research, proven methods of communication and other information relating to family involvement compiled by the Office of Policy Research and Improvement in the Department of Education.

Task Force Initiatives

In March 1989, the Commissioner established the state Agency Task Force on Parental Involvement. The Task Force was comprised of representatives from eight state agencies (Education, Labor and Employment Security, Administration, Highway Safety and Motor vehicles, Transportation, Corrections, Health and Rehabilitative Services, and Banking and Finance) and a representative from the local district public schools. It was charged with examining the state employment rules, regulations, and practices as they relate to parental involvement in education.

The Governor and Cabinet approved the State Agency Task Force Report on Parental Involvement and asked the Department of Administration to provide an analysis and recommendations of specific state personnel actions that need to be taken to allow state employees who are parents to increase their involvement in their children's education. Also, agencies under the Governor and Cabinet were directed to report quarterly about parental involvement activities within their agencies beginning March 1990.

The Department of Education Employee Family Involvement Work Group was also established to implement family involvement programs for Department employees and to serve as a model for other state agencies. The work group surveyed all Department of Education employees and supervisors on issues dealing with family involvement, including determining the number of employees with children in schools, desired work schedules, and interest in volunteering at partnership schools or their children's schools. Other assignments included developing a technical assistance paper on current activities in Florida to promote family involvement, establishing the family involvement program, and providing parenting skills workshops for interested employees. Implementation of these activities took place in 1990-91.

Other State Education Agency Initiatives

Other programs in the Department of Education which directly support involvement are listed below and illustrate the degree to which family involvement and services permeate many programs.

Parent Support in Math and Science

This program is administered by the Office of Equal Education Opportunity. It is designed to inform African American parents of the need to involve their adolescents in higher level high school mathematics and science courses. It also shows parents how they can support their teens' math and science success via actions both at school and in the home setting. The program offers presentations of facts, opportunities for discussion, a video of math and science careers, and materials to take home and use in working with teens.

Early Childhood Education and Services

The Florida First Start Program creates home-school partnerships where trained parent educators work with parents of at-risk and handicapped children in their homes and neighborhood schools. This program is in the Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education. It assists school districts in providing early, high quality parent education and support services that enable the parents to enhance their children's intellectual, language, physical and social development, thus maximizing the children's overall progress during the first three years of life. To be eligible for state funding, a district school board's plan must include the establishment of parent resource centers located in neighborhood schools; monthly home visits by trained parent educators who provide information on promoting children's intellectual, language, physical, and social develop-

ment; monthly group meetings for parents; periodic formal educational and medical screening for the children; a referral network to help parents who need special assistance; assurances that each school parent resource center is staffed by an administrator or lead teacher trained in parent education; and a method for training parent educators and for recruiting parent educators from among the families in the school's attendance zone.

Compensatory Education

The Bureau of Compensatory Education has a strong family involvement focus by virtue of the Chapter 1 federal program requirements. The purpose of family involvement in the Chapter 1 program is to help achieve the goal of grade level proficiency for educationally disadvantaged children. Parental involvement activities provide for full participation of parents who lack literacy skills or whose native language is not English. The program provides for parent education about student progress and the goals of the program; parent training in supporting learning in the home and building partnerships between the home and school; teacher and staff training in establishing positive communications with parents and assisting parents in working with their children in the home; and parental input regarding program planning, design, implementation and evaluation.

Family/School/Community Partnership

The Division of Vocational, Adult and Community Education implements the Family/School/Community Partnership Program. This is a pilot program funded with federal Carl D. Perkins Act funds. The goals of the Family/School/Community Partnership Program are to develop mechanisms for: increasing awareness of the importance of the family; preparing parents and children for their present and future roles as parents; creating an environment in the home, school, and community that will support and nurture the family; improving the coordination of systems and services designed to support and assist the family; and expanding communication between the home, school and community.

The project focuses on restructuring the school and work place to be significantly more supportive of and responsive to family needs. The school becomes a catalyst for change and mobilizes the community to create partnerships in which community resources are used to support families. Educational activities involving teachers, students, parents and community members emphasize sharing information and helping parents increase their involvement in their children's education in order to create a supportive learning environment in the home.

The primary function of the coordination activities is to insure that support services needed by children and families are provided in the most efficient and economical way with the least amount of disruption for all involved. This includes maintaining a Family Resource Center to help parents locate important information; providing direct services such as counseling; brokering indirect services, such as medical and other assistance, when needed; and networking resources.

Three pilot programs have been funded. Each has received approximately $100,000 per year for the last two years. This amount supports on-site coordinators, site-based activities and development of materials documenting the models. Information gained from the implementation of the three pilots is being used to develop a "generic model" and related materials for use at future conferences and as models for other districts. Once the models are fully documented and evaluated, other districts will be encouraged to adopt or adapt them.

The researcher visited the pilot project at the Development Research School of Florida State University in Tallahassee. The Florida State University School (FSUS) is a K-12 public school affiliated with the University. It has an enrollment of 900 students selected by lottery from all parts of the city. It has traditionally been a community school offering a full range of extended-day offerings. According to one staff person, the pilot designation and the policies of the Commissioner and Governor in support of multiple-service schools have legitimized its community education focus and allowed it to evolve into a full-service school.

The FSUS approach to restructuring consisted primarily of one major organizational change and a set of partnership-oriented policy changes both of which were initiated at a School as Family Workshop on the first day of school for teachers. At this workshop, the faculty organized themselves into five "Families"—essentially task force groups for: identifying and addressing the needs of FSUS faculty, students, families and the community; and involving the administration, faculty, students, families and community in the partnership program.

The term "Family" was deliberately chosen in the hope that these task force groups would evolve into support groups with a sense of family, and possibly with some of the attributes of strong families. The "Families" were: School Policy, Procedures and Structures Family, to address restructuring at the policy and administrative levels; Faculty Family (teachers); Student Family (students); the Family Family (students' families); and the Community Family, to develop the school-community partnership and gain the support of community resource persons and organizations.

Administrative and teacher support are necessary for the partnership program to succeed. Operationalizing the "School as Family" component that focuses on unifying the school's faculty, staff and administration in a shared commitment to the partnership is recommended as a first step. This emphasis is important because it recognizes that teachers also have employment and family-related needs that should be considered before having them extend themselves on behalf of students' families. Operationalizing the "School as Family" component consists of: identifying concerns and benefits, assessing existing programs, determining needs, considering resource availability, clarifying administrative roles/responsibilities, and supporting the Family Resource Specialist.

Among the outcomes of the new school-family focus described by Fran Kocha, an administrator at the FSU school, are:

- Teachers talk more about their families and interrelate their home and school concerns. They also have a greater appreciation of the family system and work better among themselves and with families. The family theme unites them across disciplines and grade levels and has helped to change their attitude about children—i.e., you cannot easily expel a member of your family.

- Teachers have developed special activities for communicating with and involving families (e.g., through classroom newsletters, field trips, family retreats).

- Classes have constructed activities around the theme of families. In an English class students wrote poetry about their parents, parents read the poetry and shared their feelings in response.

- A family school policy on discipline was developed. Faculty, functioning as a family, developed their own policies (e.g., no smoking in the lounge); an ombudsman position was created; and several conferences and seminars were held with and for parents.

- The parent organization is getting "beyond the bake sale" to devise ways the school can communicate better with families and develop stronger partnerships.

- As a result of improved communication with parents and an expanded outreach focus, parents are more empowered and capable of helping their children.

Full-Service Schools

Full-Service Schools have been proposed by both the Commissioner of Education and the Governor as vehicles for addressing the major problems facing at-risk children and families. The Commissioner has promoted the use of school sites to bring together health, education and social services and to coordinate them in the context of the family. Undergirding the concept of these schools is improving student achievement by improving other factors of child and family well-being.

The definition of full service is a local one, reflecting local resources and needs. However, full-service schools generally provide a wide

range of family support services including school-age child care, summer enrichment programs, medical and social service referral services, mental health counseling, parenting education classes, child abuse prevention, and job re-entry and support services for adults.

There is no specific state funding for Full-Service Schools, so they rely on a variety of sources of funds including those for: interagency student services; dropout prevention in the middle schools; adolescent pregnancy prevention; or other existing funds. In Florida, health services, child care and transportation are entitlements to pregnant and parenting teens. This creates an opportunity for schools to access Title XX dependent care grants for child care and transportation. The state also provides $3 million for expanded school health projects to provide health care for adolescent pregnant youths.

Family Services Center at Lincoln Middle School, Alachua County

A full-service school is already up and operating at Lincoln Middle School in Alachua County. The Family Services Center opened August 1990 on the grounds of the Abraham Lincoln Middle School in Gainesville adjacent to a large subsidized housing project. The school has a racial mixture of 51 percent minority and 49 percent white students, with 53 percent of students qualifying for a free or reduced price meals program.

Approximately 80-100 middle school students and their families are the target for the Alachua County Family Services Center. Eligibility for student/family participation is based on several criteria: students must be receiving compensatory education services, have a GPA less than or equal to 2.0, receive AFDC or some other form of state assistance, and have at least one younger sibling with needs that can be served through the Family Services Center. The Center's director, Linda Cantrell (a school board employee), views herself as an advocate for empowering disadvantaged parents. She considers improved school and home communication as one of the important aspects of her work at the Center.

The Center offers coordinated, comprehensive "one-stop shopping" including health, economic, social, education and parenting education. To assess service needs, a family needs assessment is conducted on-site by a family liaison specialist. Eligibility for all relevant services is established, a family progress plan is developed and monitored and identified services are either provided on-site or arranged at other facilities/agencies.

The project relies upon extensive interagency cooperation among a number of service providers to support a holistic approach to providing education and social services. It deals not only with the at-risk middle school student's academic progress, but addresses the needs of the child's entire family as well.

Alachua County school board personnel involved with the Family Services Center include the principal of the Lincoln Middle School, two family liaison specialists, an advanced registered nurse practitioner, a social worker/guidance counselor, four after school teachers, two clerical assistants, the supervisor of project development, a bookkeeper, insurance, and fringe benefits personnel. A public assistance eligibility employee is provided by the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services(HRS). A community education coordinator and a community education specialist from the School Board of Alachua County and Santa Fe Community College have responsibility for coordination and management of the project. Their time and effort represent in-kind contributions to the project.

In addition to the school district and Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, other key agencies include: the University of Florida's College of Medicine, Santa Fe Community College, various community social service agencies, city government and county government. HRS

Alachua County has a significant concentration of children and families who live in poverty. The Gainesville Metropolitan Statistical Area (GMSA) is ranked fourth lowest in family income in the entire United States. Over 23 percent of all families in Alachua county live below the poverty level. The 1986 Physicians Task Force on Hunger in America ranked the county 97th out of its 150 counties cited as 'hunger and poverty' counties in the U.S.

provides a public assistance eligibility worker along with other supervisory staff. The City of Gainesville contributes technical services and has dedicated property for the site location. Funding for the Family Service Program comes from numerous sources: $109,000 from the state department of education under an interagency student services grant; $250,000 from Head Start; $100,000 from Florida First Start; and an Even Start grant is expected shortly. Services from other agencies outposted at the site are funded through the respective agencies.

An evaluation report will be prepared by HRS, University of Florida, and the School Board of Alachua County. The report will be based on the achievement of the following project objectives: increased student learning, increased student's GPA, gain in family involvement in school activities, reduced health problems related to behavioral disorders and substance abuse, increased efficiency and effectiveness of personnel and resources, reduced incidence of teenage suicide, reduced criminal activity, and assisting disadvantaged families of targeted students with achieving economic and social independence. The evaluation component will include a control group of 80-100 middle school students with similar educational and economic backgrounds not served by the Family Services Center.

Summary

Florida's approach to family involvement has been greatly shaped by the vision and policies of the Commissioner of Education—a vision that fits within the larger policy of the state's administration to provide family services in communities and schools, improved performance of schools and students, and greater accountability and monitoring of schools at the local and community level. This vision has permeated the state education agency to the extent that it has looked closely at its own policies and their effect on state education agency employees' activities as parents with respect to their children and schools. This vision has also spurred experimentation to sponsor demonstrations and recognitions of family friendly schools and to put in place the supports that allow families to be knowledgeable and successful advocates for education locally and at the state level.

MINNESOTA

Minnesota has a strong tradition of citizen and community involvement in its public schools. Among the states, it is a pioneer in providing early childhood family education and has developed a cadre of family educators statewide. It possesses a vast network of community schools that provide a number of community services including two-generational programs and services for young children and their families in schools.

Minnesota has also been in the forefront of the movement to provide parental choice in public schools. In 1987, it was the first state to pass legislation implementing a statewide, interdistrict, open enrollment plan for the public schools. In Minnesota, choice represents an opportunity for parents to play a larger role in their child's education and to exercise informed decision making about the child's needs and the family's goals for the child.

Minnesota's recent focus on reforming schools to achieve success for all learners has made cooperation with families a critical element to the success of this initiative. In the words of Minnesota's Commissioner of Education, "No internal reform of the education system can succeed without external support from parents. Schools must work hand-in-hand with parents and every part of the community to create a climate for learning and achievement that extends far beyond the schoolhouse walls." (North Central Regional Education Laboratory State Policy Seminar, March 7, 1991)

Following is a discussion of the laws, policies and programs that support family involvement in Minnesota's schools and in the education of children. Also included are observations of local practices involving families and schools.

School Reform

Like many states, Minnesota is strongly committed to restructuring its schools and improving the effectiveness and quality of educational experiences for all learners. Among policies to implement the goal of restructuring schools for an improved climate for learning are those that provide 1) outcome-based learning; 2) student and family choice in determining educational

options; and 3) improvements of schools through the Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program. To bring about needed improvements, the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education have set the challenge to: "Give educators, parents, and community members the encouragement, flexibility, and support needed to improve their schools." (**Challenge 2000,** 1990, p. 11) This will involve providing decentralized authority and support for school site planning and decision making, and empowering parents to become active participants in strengthening schools.

The notion of empowering parents for active participation in strengthening schools and the implications for changes in schools are explored in the document, **Challenge 2000**, Minnesota's comprehensive plan to improve the effectiveness and quality of educational experiences.

> *Empowering parents to get involved is an important and necessary goal. Part of empowering people—parents and care givers—is to first believe in them and their capacities to get involved. We need to ask ourselves: How welcome do we make parents in our schools and classrooms? What role have we created for them—and, have we bothered to inform them of what their role is or should be? And, have we made it convenient for them to access and communicate with teachers and other school staff? Schools must be more accessible, give parents a meaningful role, and foster a sense of partnership.* (1990, p. 11)

According to State Representative Ken Nelson, much of the school reform legislation is interconnected and is intended to build greater capacities among staff and districts in support of parent involvement. For example, legislation promoting the development of effective schools is premised on involvement of staff and parents to assure ownership and commitment. This legislation also stresses the need for parents to be involved in their child's education and supportive of the goals and expectations of the school. Since 1983, staff from over 500 schools statewide have been trained in the research and characteristics of effective schools.

More recent legislation provides revenues to local school districts for general staff development. A district's staff development plan can support efforts to increase the involvement of parents, businesses and the community in education, including training teachers to plan and implement parental involvement programs that will more fully involve parents in their children's learning development.

Another law provides for school conference and activities leave. It specifies,

> *An employer must grant an employee leave of up to a total of 16 hours during any school year to attend school conferences or classroom activities related to the employee's child, provided the conferences or classroom activities cannot be scheduled during non-work hours.*

Educational Options

Minnesota's open enrollment plan, titled the Enrollment Options Program, allows students (K-12) to enroll in a district other than the one in which they live. The open enrollment program was passed by the 1987 State Legislature and went into effect during the 1987-88 school year. In 1989-90, 345 school districts (80 percent) participated in the open enrollment program. Slightly more than 3,000 students participated in the program or approximately one-half of one percent of Minnesota's total K-12 enrollment. Although minorities represent almost nine percent of the state's K-12 population, minority students represented five percent of participation in open enrollment.

To help families make informed decisions and learn how to participate in the K-12 Options Program, the state education agency provides literature to students and families on how to select a school and supports a hotline. Information is also provided on a wide range of enrollment option programs such as the postsecondary enrollment options for high school students who qualify, high school graduation incentives for students who are not likely to graduate or who have dropped out of school, area learning centers, public or private alternative programs, and education programs for pregnant minors and minor parents. Additionally, information on educational options and the process for exploring these options may be obtained through parent groups such as the

Minnesota PTA-PTSA, Minnesota Council for Gifted and Talented, the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesota, Indian Affairs Council and Spanish Speaking Affairs Council.

According to Peggy Hunter, in the State Department of Education's Office of Enrollment Options, the choice program has forced many districts and schools to provide better information on programs and resources to the public. Some districts have closed or consolidated schools in order to concentrate offerings and provide improved school programming. There has been a greater demand for staff development in some districts as schools are realigned and respond to the new competition of choice.

Hunter also stressed the importance of providing good information to parents contemplating this process. For this reason, her office is working on a pilot effort with industry to develop a computerized information and decision prompting system on school and district offerings to help parents make appropriate school matches for their children. This service would be interactive and accessible in libraries and other public places.

Finally, she related concerns that many parents are disenfranchised from the options process and alienated from schools. Many need skills in advocacy and assessment of their schools in order to make informed decisions about a school or program of choice for their child. Despite these concerns, there are no funds available to undertake parent outreach. Hunter's office, however, works with the four state councils of color (Hispanic, Southeast Asian, African American and Native American) which have been set up by legislation to provide oversight and input to the state on issues and concerns affecting these groups.

Community Education

Community education legislation supports a process that encourages maximum community use of the public schools and avails the human resources of the community to the school. The legislation authorizes each school board in the state to initiate a community education program in its district and provide for the general supervision of the program. It authorizes funding of community education through a combined local levy/state aid formula which may be supplemented with registration fees and funds from other sources. Members of the community including parents serve in governance capacities to these programs through advisory councils.

Among the activities which may be offered through community education are summer programs for elementary and secondary pupils, programs and services for adults with disabilities, education programs for adults, youth service programs and extended day programs. Community education is also the mechanism through which Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Program is delivered to young children and their families.

ECFE targets children from birth to kindergarten and their parents and includes substantial parental involvement. It is available to all parents throughout the state and is the centerpiece of Minnesota's effort to achieve the goal of school readiness for all children. The program's evaluation underscores the potential of early childhood family education to prevent or reduce later learning problems of children. According to the program literature,

> *Parents report increased satisfaction in their parent roles resulting from the support of other parents and the skills and understandings acquired. Both children and schools benefit from higher levels of parental involvement that continues throughout the school years.* ***(Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education, n.d. p. 9)***

The requirements of the law dictate that parents must be physically present much of the time in classes with their children or be in concurrent classes; parenting education or family education must be an integral part of every program; and early childhood family education appropriations must not be used for traditional day care or similar programs. According to the law, programs that use forms of "parent involvement common to kindergarten, elementary school, or early childhood special education programs such as parent conferences, newsletters and notes to parents, do not qualify" for ECFE support.

This requirement clearly sets early childhood family education programs apart from parent involvement programs that focus on developing improved home-school communication but do not provide family education. ECFE programs are structured on the premise that early childhood programs must assist parents in their role as primary educators of their children. The law does, however, recognize and support the role of parent participation on ECFE program advisory councils. This is a key ingredient in ensuring that programs are designed to meet the needs of families in their communities. The law requires that:

> *A majority of the council shall be parents participating in the program. The council shall assist the board in developing, planning, and monitoring the early childhood family education program. The council shall report to the school board and the community education advisory council.*

More recently, community education's role in school restructuring has been factored into the state's **Challenge 2000** plan for improving education statewide. Under the challenge to restructure the school day and school calendar to meet students' and family needs for the 21st century, local school boards are encouraged to expand the concept of "community schools."

> *Schools must be taken into the community, and the community brought into the school. . . . School buildings should be open throughout the day, evenings and weekends, and available for many uses by school staff and community members. Community education programs statewide are urged to work closely with other local organizations and groups in promoting community-school partnerships.*
> *(**Challenge 2000**, 1990, p. 12)*

Parent Involvement Legislation

In addition to legislation that supports an environment and attitude that views parental involvement as central to improving student and school success, there is legislation directing the state department of education, in consultation with the state curriculum advisory committee, to develop guidelines and model plans for parental involvement programs. The law requires that such programs will:

What can happen when schools reach out to address community needs is evidenced by a special effort of the St. Paul Public School District called the Southeast Asian Access Project. About 20 percent of students in the St. Paul schools are Southeast Asian and there has been great need for schools to reach out to this community. According to Stephen Wojta, a school social worker, "Parents wanted to know more about how the schools work and what they could do to help their children, but many only had time available on Saturdays. Also, for many, transportation was a problem." The schools in collaboration with the community opened the schools on Saturdays to provide a range of programs including Head Start, computer programming, Hmong and Vietnamese literature, and GED classes. As many as 700 parents routinely participate in these activities.

- engage the interests and talents of parents or guardians in recognizing and meeting the emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of their school-age children;
- promote healthy self-concepts among parents or guardians and other family members;
- offer parents or guardians a chance to share and learn about educational skills, techniques, and ideas; and
- provide creative learning experiences for parents or guardians and their school-age children.

Model plans for a parental involvement program must include at least the following:

- program goals and means;
- methods for informing parents or guardians in a timely way about the program;
- strategies for ensuring the full participation of parents or guardians, including those parents or guardians who lack literacy skills or whose native language is not English;

- procedures for coordinating the program with the K-12 curriculum, with parental involvement programs currently available in the community, and with other education facilities and programs located in the community;

- strategies for training teachers and other school staff to work effectively with parents and guardians;

- procedures for parents and guardians and educators to evaluate and report progress toward program goals; and

- a mechanism for convening a local community advisory on parent involvement composed primarily of parents or guardians.

Activities contained in the model plans must include:

- educational opportunities for families that enhance children's learning development;

- educational programs for parents or guardians on families' educational responsibilities and resources;

- the hiring, training, and use of parental involvement liaison workers to coordinate family involvement activities and to foster communication among families, educators and students;

- curriculum materials and assistance in implementing home and community-based learning activities;

- technical assistance, including training to design and carry out family involvement programs;

- family resource centers;

- parent training programs and reasonable and necessary expenditures associated with training sessions;

- reports to parents on children's progress;

- use of parents as classroom volunteers, tutors and aides; or

- soliciting parents' suggestions in planning, developing and implementing school programs.

Activities in Support of Parent Involvement

To orchestrate these policies and activities, the Department of Education brought on a full-time parent involvement specialist for the 1990-91 school year. The position is funded through federal Chapter 2 block grant funds. The specialist, Karolyn Kingsbury, sees as her focus the provision of support for parent involvement in elementary and secondary schools. (The family education focus of the Early Childhood Family Education Program implemented through Community Education addresses issues pertaining to parents of younger children.) No funds have been set aside for implementing parent involvement activities, therefore, the extent of technical assistance available to school districts has been limited.

Given the great potential that exists within some of the state's legislation for providing systemic supports to schools and staff, the lack of a greater state technical assistance capacity is particularly unfortunate. For example, the Reserved Revenue for Staff Development legislation provides opportunities for in-service training in methods and strategies for involving families in children's learning development. There is great potential and need for assistance to and monitoring and evaluation of district staff develop plans that focus on staff capacities to work with families. In spite of these limitations, the parent involvement office has been successful in facilitating and coordinating activities among policy and family focused organizations and groups statewide, thereby furthering the SEA's parent involvement initiative.

In April 1990, a conference on parental involvement was held at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs of the University of Minnesota. It was co-sponsored by 28 organizations as diverse as African-American Parent Advocates, the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans, Head Start of Minnesota, Minneapolis Citizens Committee on Public Education, Minnesota Community Education Association,

and the Congress of Parents, Teachers and Students, Inc. The Minnesota Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association compiled, wrote and printed the conference report. Over 300 participants were in attendance from all over the state.

The purposes of the conference were: 1) to initiate a public dialogue on how to increase parent-educator partnership in Minnesota schools, and 2) to discuss models that are working in the state. A variety of models applicable to different types of parents and families were showcased. Conference participants not only listened to national experts on parent involvement practices such as Joyce Epstein of the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, Johns Hopkins University, but also heard visions of parent involvement from local parents, principals, superintendents, and teacher educators. Brainstorming sessions were held to develop strategies to increase parent-educator partnerships. The conference was held in the wake of recently passed legislation requiring the State Department of Education to develop guidelines and model plans for parent involvement programs.

As a follow-up to the 1990 conference, the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) supported a policy seminar held March 7, 1991 to explore further components of parent involvement programs that have been developed by Minnesota school districts, discuss the barriers that limit the implementation of these programs, and search for solutions to eliminate these barriers. That seminar resulted in the development of the following six parent involvement goals for Minnesota.

Parent Involvement Goals

1. Creating Awareness: All parents, educators, and community members will realize that parent and community involvement in education is vital to the success of students, schools and society.

2. Working Together: School personnel, parents, and students will work together effectively to give students the greatest opportunity for success.

3. Welcoming Climate: The educational system will assure a welcoming climate that respects and values the diversity of our communities and empowers all parents and students to be involved in achieving common goals.

4. Communicating: Communication methods and involvement activities will ensure that all families have the knowledge to become active, effective participants in the education of children.

5. Decision making: The education system will assure that parents and educators are equally involved in decision making. The decision-making process will include the active involvement of the students.

6. Coordinating Support and Service: Schools, families, and agencies will cooperate to provide coordinated support and services to children and their families.

These goals are included as a key part of the Department's soon to be published **Parent Involvement Guide** on model plans for parental involvement programs.

Local Parent Advocacy

The researcher spent a day visiting schools in the Minneapolis area with Liz Morque and Annis Clark of the Minneapolis Citywide Parent, Teacher, and Student Association (PTSA). Morque and Clark had been co-chairs of the Citizen's Committee for the Better Schools Referendum. This was a grass roots campaign to get voter support for additional funds for the public schools. Funds raised through the referendum were targeted to begin a three-year phased implementation of reduced class size starting in the Fall of 1991, expand early childhood education, and provide teachers with the newest teaching strategies to take advantage of reduced class size.

The campaign became a rallying point for many segments of the Minneapolis community—parents, students, teacher unions, political groups, etc. It spawned a number of education awareness activities throughout the city and in the schools. For example, one school organized

a Lower Class Size Week in order to sensitize children, parents and community members to the effects of large class sizes. The school's Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) sponsored a Community Forum on the issues of class size. The discussion concerned the obstacles to achieving lower class size, what needs to be done to overcome these obstacles and who is responsible for achieving change.

In addition to advocating for improved education in the district, the citywide PTSA provides leadership training for PTA officers and conducts voter registration drives. PTSA also provides parent representation on local education agency committees such as the youth services committee which establishes opportunities for students to provide service to the community; the transparent schools project, which implements a program in the schools that uses telephones to increase communication between home and school; the PER Committee which is responsible for planning, evaluating and reporting on the curriculum; and principal selection committees.

The researcher visited Washburn High School in Minneapolis. Washburn has an enrollment of 1200 students. It has gone through a number of administration changes in recent years. In keeping with the state initiative to provide greater flexibility and authority at the local level, the District has adopted a policy on school-based management and is writing an action plan. The school staff was very receptive to school-based management, which they saw as a method for ensuring continuity and stability despite all the administrative changes. A new principal who was committed to school-based management was selected. Washburn is one of four pilot schools in the city that are working with a private foundation to help organize and support school-based management processes.

A year ago, a faculty task force set up a school structure to address issues of attendance, discipline, student/staff recognition and community decision making. The task force continues in place to address emerging and ongoing needs. A school management team has also been organized and meets weekly. It is composed of one administrator, six teachers, one clerical staff, one custodial staff, two students (chosen by the student body) and three parents (chosen by the Parent Council). An additional requirement is that the team be reflective of the ethnic/culture and gender balance of the school.

The team's priority is school restructuring to address the needs of the school as identified by staff, parents and students. For example, many parents and staff feel that students are not achieving at high enough levels. Some students want access to a greater number of electives and want to expand the school day to include seven courses instead of six. Many faculty members want to put greater emphasis on developing student study and organizational skills. The needs of constituent groups have been surveyed, priorities determined and an action plan put into effect.

Staff indicated that there has been much parent involvement throughout the school within traditional areas of involvement (e.g., in a booster capacity, helping in the office, etc.). The decision-making process is a new area for parents but one which is helping to make a more cohesive community of students, families and staff. Concern, however, was voiced with the low level of minority parent involvement in the school.

Summary

Minnesota is building upon a long tradition of early childhood and family education and expanding its goals for parent involvement to families of older children. State initiatives involving interdistrict choice and school-based management are creating the need to provide better information about schools and to make this information available to all parents. Minnesota's focus is on making schools more accepting climates for many forms of family involvement. Minnesota has also provided formal supports to education staff for improving their capacity to interact with families by targeting in-service training funds for this purpose.

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